

THE CONTINENTAL REFORMERS

the proletariat of the nineteenth, or that the doctrine of predestination satisfied the same hunger for an assurance that the forces of the universe are on the side of the elect as was to be assuaged in a different age by the theory of historical materialism. He set their virtues at their best in sharp antithesis with the vices of the established order at its worst, taught them to feel that they were a chosen people, made them conscious of their great destiny in the Providential plan and resolute to realize it. The new law was graven on tablets of flesh ; it not merely rehearsed a lesson, but fashioned a soul. Compared with the quarrelsome, self-indulgent nobility of most European countries, or with the extravagant and half-bankrupt monarchies, the middle classes, in whom Calvinism took root most deeply, were a race of iron. It was not surprising that they made several revolutions, and imprinted their conceptions of political and social expediency on the public life of half a dozen different States in the Old World and in the New,

The two main elements in this teaching were the insistence on personal responsibility, discipline, and asceticism, and the call to fashion for the Christian character an objective embodiment in social institutions.

Though logically connected, they were often in practical discord* The ^influence^ of

Calvinism was not simple but complex, and extended far beyond the circle of Churches which could properly Calvinist theology was accepted where Calvinist discipline was repudiated. The bitter struggle between Presbyterians and Independents in England did not prevent men, to whom the whole idea of religious uniformity was fundamentally abhorrent, from drawing inspiration from the conception of a visible Christian society, in which, as one of them said, the Scripture was "really and materially to be fulfilled." "Both an intense individualism and a rigorous Christian Socialism could be deduced from Calvin's doctrine. Which of them